

NOTICE OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF CLASS ACTION CONCERNING THE PROCESSING OF FOOD STAMP APPLICATIONS

Have you applied for or tried to apply for or renew eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP), also known as Food Stamps, in Nebraska at any time since January 1, 2012? If so, this notice gives you information about the settlement of a lawsuit regarding the processing of applications.

Background

In 2014, a class action lawsuit, entitled *Leiting-Hall, et. al v. Phillips, et al.*, 4:14-cv- 03155, was brought alleging that the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") fails, in some cases, to timely provide SNAP benefits to households who file a new application or seek to renew their SNAP benefits. The class representatives and DHHS have reached agreement to settle the class claims.

Proposed Settlement

You can see the entire proposed settlement at the web site for Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, <https://neappleseed.org>, or the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, www.nclej.org.

The basic terms of the settlement are:

1. **Class.** A class is certified consisting of all Nebraska residents who, since January 1, 2012, have applied, are applying, or will apply for SNAP (food stamps) from DHHS through an initial and/or recertification application.
2. **Timely Processing.** DHHS will process applications and renewals for SNAP and decide eligibility within the time required by law.
3. **Reporting and Training.** DHHS will provide monthly reports to the plaintiffs' attorneys that show how long it is taking to process initial and renewal SNAP applications. DHHS will also train employees as necessary to ensure compliance with the law and the settlement terms.
4. **Informal Review Process.** DHHS will provide a way by which the plaintiffs' attorneys can bring to DHHS's attention those instances where an application may not have been processed as required. DHHS will investigate the issue and report back to plaintiffs' attorneys within 5 business days.
5. **Enforcement.** Plaintiffs retain the right to return to Court to enforce the settlement if DHHS fails to meet the required performance levels. Unless otherwise extended by the court, plaintiffs' right to enforce the settlement only ends after DHHS achieves and maintains monthly processing performance of 96% for 25 out of 28 months.

Right to Object

Any class member has the right to let the Court, the attorneys, and the parties know if he or she objects to the proposed settlement. The Court has set a hearing on April 1, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. at the following address:

U.S. District Court
Courtroom 1
Robert V. Denney Federal Building
100 Centennial Mall North
Lincoln, NE 68508-3803

You may also object to the settlement by writing a letter by March 23, 2016 to the Court at this address:

Chambers of U.S. District Judge John M. Gerrard
Robert V. Denney Federal Building
100 Centennial Mall North, Room 586
Lincoln, NE 68508-3803

If you write a letter to the Court about the settlement, the letter will be filed electronically by the clerk and therefore will be available for public review.

You may also call the following attorneys, who have represented the plaintiffs in this lawsuit, if you have any questions:

Molly M. McCleery, James A. Goddard
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
Tel. (402) 438-8853

Marc Cohan, Gina Mannix
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
Tel. (212) 633-6967